princess Fiaki's Birthday. A Tale of Old Days in Japan

ad wealth of detail, had been carefully

It was winter and very cold, and the sale of costly wood, carved with art and of detail, had been carefully deed around the Prince, making the room which he sat very small.

Many beautiful robes lined with warm sool and covered with priceless silk lay reset in contrasting colors on the daimio's reast, and on one wide sleeve of the outergest garment was embroidered a star smily, which knows no equal throughout and by five balls encircling a sixth, his was the crest of the illustrious Kauga smily, which knows no equal throughout and by shown and his money, felt nevertheless had sand his money, felt nevertheless had tried to think of something for the antiversary of his daughter's birthday and be could think of nothing.

It was unfortunately true that the Princes, who would on the morrow attain the sanity of sixteen, already possessed everyging the sixteen and proposed in contrasting colors on the daimio's reast and on one wide sleeve of the outer-most garment was embroidered a star dinary demand of the Prince.

"There is only one thing to be done," he went'on, noting the frightened faces about him. "Listen! We may yet be saved.

"Every one within three leagues around, men, women, girls and boys, nobles, merchants and peasants, must set instantly to work with silk, velvet, satin and paper and make scores of flowers. Let them out up their clothes, their hangings; let them make use of their fans, cushions; everything they have.

"Then, before daybreak, all these flowers must be tied, fastened or glued to all the country near the palace; the finest and best ined tried to think of something for the antiversary of his daughter's birthday and he ran swiftly to his own palace, noting, with terror, that the short winter day was nearly ended. Gathering his colleagues around him, the told them of the extraordinary demand of the Prince.

"Every one within three leagues around, men, women girls and boys, nobles, merchants and peasants, must set instantly to work with silk, velvet, satin and paper and make scores of flowers. L

mity of sixteen, already possessed everyg that it was possible for a young lady to ss, but this was no consolation to the nio. What was the use of being a Prince, having such wealth, if he could not offer something new and pleasing?

Presently he arose. will go to her apartments. Perhaps, asciously, she will tell me what she uld like." he said to himself.

He struck a bronze gong and immediately carved panels rolled open, disclosing dless halls filled with samurais of noble rth, pages, guards and menials. The murais who wore the two swords bowed ep while all the others prostrated themdres on the ground.

"I will visit my daughter," said the

Fiaki, or Ray of Sunshine, sat on a pile of shions in the hall of her own particular alace. The folds of her magnificent robes ere arranged symmetrically about her many colors and shapes, but most abunant was the wonderful kimono of blue tin everywhere embroidered with spider be in which were caught the many coled petals of summer flowers.

The young girl's face was white as snow, crimson lips opened slightly to disclose rows of pearly teeth, and the eyebrows, llowing the manner of Princesses, were sely shaven and replaced by two little ack patches painted very high on the fore-

As the Prince entered, Fiaki hid her face an instant in the long sleeves of her e, thus greeting her father with a tender modest salute. The daimle smiled pleasure at the grace and beauty of child whom he adored. He overelmed her with caressing names, asking if she was happy and if there was noth-

Ah! illustrious Prince and father," cried laki, clasping her hands sorrowfully, how can I be happy while the earth sufers? How can I smile when the skies
eep? Ah, the gods are cruel to have
reated the winter season! I feel like a
oor little exiled plant, barely alive, and
st unable to die!"

"It is certain there is nothing she desires much as springtime," thought the ince to himself, once more back in his He soowled fiercely at the gray clouds

he soowled nercely at the gray cloths utside. Suddenly he commanded the resence of his chief Minister. Nai-da-tsin astened to learn the wishes of his illustrious ord, but the Minister's heart sank at the ght of the Prince's sombre face.

To-morrow is my daughter's birthday," he began coldly. "I desire, do you undertand, I desire that by daybreak to-morrow he trees and bushes of the park and the letter country surrounding the palace shall

trees and ousness of the palace shall tire country surrounding the palace shall covered with flowers, as in the first onths of the springtime. You may go."

Your will shall be obeyed in all things, urmured the Minister, bowing himself

Once outside he clutched his hands in the protecting sleeves of his garment.

"It is exile, it is death!" he thought, bitwissers "What can I have done that should like room and a single prince. She will love him more than she does the springtime."

The daimio handed the Minister a key of proving ingruised with gold.

eally desires that the spring should come is daughter. Well, I will not trouble

go, and remember that your very lives de-pend upon your success."
Without a word the Ministers fied im-mediately from the palace. In less than an hour there was not a palace nor a house in the city nor a single village in the country where the inhabitants were not making flowers, and if one had looked that night from the daimio's palace he would have seen thousands of lanterns bobbing about among the trees in every direction.

among the trees in every direction.

The next morning, as her women finished dressing her, Fiaki heard the sound of sweet singing and many instruments beneath her window.

"Ah! it is my birthday to-day," she said, with a shiver. "Why are the gods so cruel as to cause it to fall in the winter time?" Her women pulled aside the curtains from the window.

What a beautiful day, mistress," they said.

Indeed, as if it too were a courtier, the sky was clothed in richest blue, in which the sun like a golden jewel shone proudly.

Languidly the Princess walked out upon the balcony. But what a cry of joy and surprise broke from her lips! Flowers, flowers, in every direction and as far as she could see. The Princess rubbed her eyes. Was it a miracle?

"Father, father!" she cried as the noble

Prince entered her apartment, "truly, you

daimlo, smiling with pleasure, proposed a ride through the park to see the magical springtime. The delighted Prin-cess clapped her hands, and the brilliant procession of gayly clad courtiers headed by the Prince and his daughter started slowly down the winding avenue.
"What a delicious perfume scents the air!"

cried the Princess.
Surprised, the daimio realized that the Surprised, the daimo realized that the soft odors of the spring flowers did indeed fill the air. The secret was that every few rods a fire of sweetest incense burned in carefully hidden braziers.

Presently an especially beautiful pink plum tree caught the attention of the Princess.

"I wish a branch of that tree," she cried. happily. "It will be a memory of one of the most beautiful promenades of my The dainio looked uneasily at the

"She will discover the cheat," he thought. But Nai-da-tsin did not tremble nor grow

"Grant me the honor to pluck it for you," He rode up to the tree and brought back

a superb branch. The princess seized in burying her face in the fresh, rosy flowers. The daimio was more surprised than sfore. He did not guess that the Prime inister had emptied all the greenhouses of all the palaces and had prepared many trees for just such an occasion. "You are a wonderful man," the Prince cried to his Prime Minister when they re-

turned to the palace. "You are absolutely a magician. But, tell me, what can I do next year to surpass this marvellous féte?" The Prime Minister smiled slowly. He pointed to a charming young man, son of the Prince of Satsuma, who was aiding the Princess Flaki to alight from her coach. "When another year has passed and the Princess receives another birthday as a

The daimio handed the minister a key of bronze, incrusted with gold.

"This is the key to my treasures," he said. "Take it and make what use of it you will. You are more valuable to me than gold or precious stones."

AUTOMOBILING ON MOUNT OLYMPUS

Match Race Between Vulcan and Phœbus Apollo—The Original Hammerer Up Against the Up-to-Date Regulation Put in Force at Charon's Ferry.

Olympus. All the gods and goddesses were there for the regular Saturday night smoker. The latchstring to the Gate of Clouds had been left out, and everybody in the celestial push was present.

The heavenly party had partaken plentifully of ambrosia (the best advertised breakfast food of the gods), and the Dedal cups had been oft replenished with nectar of the choicest vintages.

For a time things ran smoothly. The Olympian topliners performed their several stunts to the gratification of the audience. But things were not going fast enough

to suit Ganymede, the youthful barkeep of the palace. So into the next bucket of brew he poured enough absinthe to send all the Parisian boulevardiers to the nut foundry of Sabonne. He added other ingredients dear to the hearts of mortals, and concocted a mixture that was the progenitor of the modern cocktail.

The celestials greedily absorbed this earthly paint, and the fun soon grew fast

Apollo stood up, lightly thrummed his tuneful lyre, and began to sing "In the Good Old Summer Time." The Muses in responsive strains rendered "Bedelia," Juno's peacock screaming an accompaniment to the chorus. Thereupon the Three Graces did a triple skirt dance. Old Neptune, smelling of salt horse and

missionary rum, next executed the sailor's hornpipe. Mars, who was a bit groggy. began pleading with Ganymede to send a jug of his double-cross mixture to Gen. Kuropatkin. Finally old Jupiter, after quaffing his thirty-third stein, stood up. shook his Hyperion curls, let off a bunch of thunderbolts and then fell off his throne with a thud that made high Olympus

"The old man's down and out," cried Juno, as she sent out a hurry-up call for Esculapius, who quickly responded and administered a few bichloride jabs into Jove. The attendants carried the old man distanca.

down the lid. The noise and confusion awakened Morpheus, who began spinning a string of irdescent dreams to trouble the slumbers of the batty occupants of the psychopathic ward in Bellevue. Adonis revived sufficiently to murmur "I wish I was in Dixey,"

out, threw him into the coal bin and shut

and then collapsed in the arms of Venus. One by one the Celestials and guests were borne to their golden couches and covered over with fleecy clouds, until only the dead game sports and a few pikers were left at the Knockers' Table. Already it was nearing the time for the

Flaming Car of Day to start on its journey. The Hours were harnessing the horses that were even now filling the air with their snortings and flery breath, and trampling the turf with their golden shod hoofs. Old Vulcan (the original Hammerer)

who by this time was pretty well potted, was descanting from the head of the Knockers' Table upon the speed and prowess of his automobile, just from the shops of the Cyclops. It was painted a cerulean hue and called The Thunderer, in bonor of Jove. He swore lustily that he could distance any of the comets, owners up.

"I'll bet my anvil against the purple pajamas of Phœbus Apollo that I can beat his team of Percherons in a getaway race to Hades," roared the old blacksmith. "I'll go you," replied Apollo, and they all repaired to the paddock. Phæbus, clad in purple vesture, jumped

into his chariot, gathered up the ribbons over his four abreast, and cried "Giddap." Old Vulcan put on his oilskins, adjusted his goggles and pulled the throttle wide open. "Go!" cried Mercury, waving his ca-

It had been a strenuous night on Mount | "the terrible right arm" of the prostrate | left the Chariot of the Sun in the empyreal

In its terrific flight the gasolene terror knocked off the crumpled horn of the Bull, severed an arm of the Scorpion and made the Big Bear growl and the Little Bear squeal. The serpent, coiled up around the North Pole, thinking a rival python was on the rampage, hissed back at the speeding auto and then proceeded to

wallow his tail. On, on flew the Blue Streak, knocking off the handle of the Big Dipper and jabbing out a tooth in the Lion's jaw. In whizzing past the earth a corner of the tonneau grazed the cheek of a New York Alderman which nearly put the machine out of business. It began to look as if Phœbus had been, left at the post as Vulcan neared the tape.

At last the grimy autoist arrived at the Styx ferry.

Old Charon tooted his whistle, and Vulcan, responding with his "honk, honk," shut off the power. While he was digging down in his pocket for the coin to buy his ferry ticket with, Charon walked down the plank. "Read this notice, you old chimney

sweep," he said, " and draw your fire." Vulcan read:

NOTICE.

The fires of all automobiles propelled by gasolene or steam must be drawn before boarding the Styx ferryboat.

CHAPON, Pilot.

While he was yet reading the plunging steeds of Phœbus dashed past him and up the gangplank, and the boat pulled out for the Portal of Hades.

"Stung!" cried old Vulcan. "Philopena!" shouted back the grizzly Pluto from the box office of the Infernal

"Go!" cried Mercury, waving his caduceus.
"They're off!" shouted the pikers.
Down the Milky Way it was even Stephen.
but soon the Thunderer took the lead and Chorus."

TWO WOMEN IN A RACE FOR A FLAT: RESULT, A DEAD HEAT

"The owner of this flat building doesn't believe in having those unsightly 'Apartments to Let' signs stuck out in front, and so we advertise the vacant flats in the papers," said the agent of the building. The very desirable \$40 a month flat on the third floor was advertised in Thursday morning's papers. I got action on the advertisements the first thing.

"Two young matrons wearing the worried expression of the flat seeker in their eyes appeared in my ground floor office at the same instant, shortly after 9 o'clock in the morning. They looked as if they'd dressed hurriedly and had hustled from their homes, on flat hunting intent, immediately after getting their husbands off to their

"They both, as I say, entered my office door at once. It was a dead heat and no mistake. " 'That \$40 flat,' they both said to me

a breath and breathlessly. 'Yes,' said I. 'Are you together? "I knew that they weren't together, but I'm a real mischievous old man, and I like

to study 'em. " 'No!' they both snapped together with a suddenness that was amply satisfying to my sense of curiosity.

'Well,' said I, taking the keys from the rack and pretending to be a whole lot interested in a setter pup that I saw out of the window, 'I suppose I may as well show the flat to both of you ladies at the same

" 'I got here first!' snapped the black eyed one, giving me rather a baleful glancenot half so baleful, though, as the stare which she gave the other young matron.

'Well, I like that!' exclaimed the latter, who was blond, but had plenty of sparks in her blue eyes at that. 'Didn't I arrive here as soon as she did?' addressing me.

" 'Oh, well,' said I, in my best diplomatic manner and sidestepping the question, 'it isn't likely that you'll both like the flat,

you know-perhaps neither of you will." They both tossed their heads as much as to say that they didn't know so much about that, and I seized the moment to lead them to the elevator and to conduct

them to the vacant forty dollar flat. " 'Why, how nice!' they both exclaimed at once when I led them into the flat. "Then, naturally and strictly as a feminine matter of course, they both peered

ROMANCE OF THE PURCHASE OF A VILLA IN ITALY into the clothes closets. "'Oh, what lots of closet space!' they exclaimed, taking pains, however, to address their remarks to me, and never so

much as looking at each other. "'Yes'm-yes'm,' said I, bestowing a separate and individual nod of acquiescence

upon each of the young matrons.

"What cute red wall paper! they said just as one woman when I led them into the dining room. "I am not exaggerating in the least— they said just precisely the same things and at exactly the same time, so that it almost seemed as if they'd been rehearsed

almost seemed as if they'd been rehearsed and were doing part of a sketch. But, identical as they were orally, they were far apart in spirit. I could see that by the glances which they began to shoot at each other out of the corners of their eyes.

"'Oh, what a nice gas range!' 'And filtered water!' 'That porcelain tub is a new one, isn't it?' 'The kitchen certainly is cunning.' 'Oh, I'll take this—I'm sure my husband will like it,' were their simultaneous remarks. The last one got me going, and came pretty nigh sending me to the mat for the count.

"'But.' said 1, trying to gain time by

and I knew what it was then to possess that umpire feeling.

"But, put in the black eyed one, I am perfectly positive that my husband will like this flat, and we are all packed and ready

like this flat, and we are all packed and ready to move in at once."

"And I am equally certain that my husband will be delighted with this flat, and—and we've been all packed and ready to move for a week,' said the blue eye one, as if that latter fact sort of nudged along the priority of her claim.

"I will pay you a deposit on the rent fit once,' said the black cyed one, beginning to dig into her chatelaine bag.

"So will I,' said the blue eyed one, snapping open her wristbag.

ping open her wristbag.
"I was out on the limb for fair by this time, but I essayed another sidestep to

gain time.
"Perhaps,' I said, 'you ladies had better
bring your husbands to look at the flat,
and then there'll be a better chance to arrive and then there'll be a better chance to arrive at an understanding. It is possible—rather probable, in fact—that they may not be so taken with the flat as you are, and in the meantime you may, if you choose, let me have your references—that's the invariable rule, you know—and I'll look them up.'

"'Here are my references!' they both said at once, and they began to call off names so rapidly that my note book looked like that of an incompetent stenographer.

like that of an incompetent stenographer.

"I'll have my husband here to look at
the flat immediately after luncheon—about
1 o'clock—I'll telephone down,' they both

said, in essence, at once, and then I got them down in the elevator and out. "They tossed their pretty heads at each other while standing in the entrance waiting for cars, and then they took cars going

ing for cars, and then they took cars going in opposite directions.

"Well, sir, the couples got off cars that met right on this corner at exactly four minutes past 1. The husbands were a pair of good natured looking chaps, and didn't appear to be in any great hurry. But their wives grabbed hold of their arms into the corner as the good of the cars.

But their wives grabbed hold of their arms just as soon as they got off the car.

"'Please hurry, won't you?' they said impatiently to their husbands, literally dragging them to the entrance to my office. And the whole four squeezed into my little office literally at the same instant.

"'Have you looked up the references?' the two women inquired of me at once.

"Yes,' I replied, 'and they are all excellent.'

"The two husbands stood close together, behind their busy wives, and I caught them nodding and winking at each other.

nodding and winking at each other.

"I took the four of them up to the flat.

"Isn't it too perfectly dear, Jim?' inquired the blue eyed one of her husband.

"Isn't it cunnin', Jack?' asked the black eyed one of her man at the same instant.

"'Sall right—kind o' cooped up and dinky—but, 'sall right,' replied the husbands, virtually together, and not enthusiastically. thusiastically.

"Why. I think it's just grand,' said the

"Why, I think it's just grand, said the black eyed one spiritedly.
"What kind of a flat do you expect to get for \$40 a month? somewhat spitefully inquired the blue eyed one of her husband.
"Oh, 'sall right enough,' replied the two men, and then they looked each other over and grinned.
"How about tossing for it, old man?" the husband of the black eyed one inquired of the husband of the blue eyed one, and they were both still grinning foolishly.
"Suits me all right,' replied the one with the blue eyed wife, and he produced a half dollar. 'What d'ye call it?"
"Heads,' said the other man.
"And heads it was.

"And heads it was.
"The blue eyed wife looked very vindic-

tive indeed.
"Such silliness,' she snapped, looking daggers at her husband, the loser of the toss. 'I just wish you had to look for \$40 flats—you wouldn't be so willing to flip a coin for one when you found the one that suited—indeed you wouldn't.'

"'Don't be a hard loser, my dear,' her husband replied, flabbily—and then they

went.
"'I wasn't so crazy for the flat,' I heard "'I wasn't so crazy for the flat,' I heard the black eyed one say to her husband, black grad for two families, you know."
"Then they both regarded me resentfully"

"I wasn't so crazy for the flat,' I heard the black eyed one say to her husband, black grad to her washed out, blondined thing wasn't going to chisel me out of it."

SCHOOLBOYS THEN AND NOW;

MONOLOGUE ON A RAINY DAY

my youngest boy-he's 10-was ready to start for school," observed Stoutsome, "and his mother was on hand, of course, to see that he didn't make any mistakes.

"'It's wet out this morning, son,' she said to him, 'and you must put on your cravenette and your rubbers.' "And the kid, of course, put 'em on-

that is, he permitted his mother to help him on with the things. "She slipped his shoes into the rubbers

and slid his arms into his nice warm raincoat with the ulster belt at the back, and handed him his stack of books. Then the tyke strolled out into the hall, took his pick of the umbrellas in the rack and off he went whistling and ready for any old kind of weather. "Gosh, but that boy looked trig and com-

fortable! And it pleased me to see the little tyke that way, too.

"But as he strutted down the street, perky with the knowledge that things were just about coming his way—well. I looked the shaver over, and I fell to thinking of what a dead snap that boy's got compared to what drifted my own way out in the queer little old Western town where I hung out when I was his age.

"The only overcoat that ever I owned as a boy, or, for the matter of that, that I ever owned at all before I began to buy overcoats for myself, was like that one that Simeon Ford has described so entertainingly-that is to say, it was whittled down from my dad's old Army of the Potomac overcoat. It was a sort of heirloom in our family, and it was also a holy

"Every boy that appeared in our family had to take his regular whack at wearing that overcoat, and the boy who showed a contumacious spirit about wearing it, on account of the ridicule of his schoolmates, as exhibited by their hoarse hoots of 'Sojer!' and 'Coffee cooler!'-well, that boy just had to go without any overcoat

"And rubbers for a boy! Well, I'd just like to've seen the expression on the faces of the old folks if any such crazy suggestion had ever been made to them—rubbers to cover the regular footgear of a boy going

cover the regular footgear of a boy going to school!

"We wore topboots. Sometimes they were boots approximately of the size of our feet, but not often. I don't remember ever having had a pair of boots that were originally devised, designed or intended solely for my own wearing.

"As a rule, the boots that I were to school were about four sizes too large for me, so that I had to be mighty wary in walking or running in muddy and sizeky paths, lest I pulled my feet right smack out of my boots and landed in the mire in my stocking feet. I had that dismal experience several times before I picked up the necessary skill that finally enabled me to take chances even on wading in a duck pond without being in any danger of losing my boots.

"It was drizzling the other morning when by youngest boy-he's 10-was ready to have taught his mother too much."

"It was drizzling the other morning when ceded him. He hasn't got much chance in such a situation. The other fellows have taught his mother too much." "Nope, I never managed to stay home from school on account of my boots being frozen. When I'd try that on my mother she would say to me, calmly and placidly:
"'I know your boots are frozen, son—
but there's plenty of mutton tallow, you

know.'

"And I knew what that meant, of course.
Meant that I'd have to grease my boots
before going to bed that night.

"My mother 'ud put a lump of tallow
on the back of the kitchen stove—the receptacle for the tallow was usually the
lid of an old tin shoe blacking box Then
she'd see to it that all of us boys placed
our boots on a line near the stove, to sort
o' thaw them out.

our boots on a line near the stove, to sort o' thaw them out.

"Then we'd take turns dipping into the tallow dish with our fingers, and then it 'ud be a case of each boy using his own elbow grease to get the kinks and dents and contrariness out of those boots. We'd have to rub and rub and rub the tallow into the leather, our mother standing by with her hands on her hips, and a kindly, interested expression on her face, watching to see that we did the work well, and then we'd plant the boots alongside the stove, in a row, so's to keep them sort of warm during

row, so's to keep them sort of warm during the night and not have the tallow cake on them—and thus we'd settle our own chances of being able to crawl out of going to school the following morning on account of

on the following morning on account of frozen boots.

"And umbrellas! A boy of my day and date going to school of a morning under the shelter of an umbrella! Why, he'd have attracted just as much attention that way as he would have if he'd gone to school on the back of a camel of the desert.

"There was only one umbrella in our family, anyhow, and that was a huge, greenish, parachutish affair, that looked suspiciously like it had been cribbed from a wagon—you know those big front-seat-of-a-wagon umbrellas—and tuat one umbrella was strictly sacred to the grown up or a-wagon umorenas—and that the brelia was strictly sacred to the grown up folks. Us younkers would as soon have thought of taking it out, to school or anywhere else, as we would of taking the old daguerrectype of our grandmother out into the rain.

into the rain.

"Oh, we just plugged along, and got wet and then dry again, and caught colds and got over 'em again, best we could, and certainly as well as our providers could afford. And here I am, at that, sound enough, and glad enough, when it comes to that, to see my own youngster a-saling along to school in rubbers and raincost, bought especially for him to fit his sizes, and any old umbrella he durn pleases to take out of the umbrella rack.

"Only I wish the self-contained little midge

"Only I wish the self-contained little midge wouldn't take it all as such a dead straight, it's-coming-to-me matter of course."

When Theatregoers Smoke Most From the Philadelphia Record.

that there is any connection between the lest I pulled my feet right smack out of my boots and landed in the mire in my stocking feet. I had that dismal experience several times before I picked up the necessary skill that finally enabled me to take chances even on wading in a duck pond without being in any danger of losing my boots.

"But, overlarge as all of the boots were that came my way when I was a tyke, they were mighty hard to get into when they were frozen stiff in the winter time. I used to try to work this fact as an excuse to stay home from school on extremely cold days, but never managed to get by with that. There'd been a lot of boys in the family before I got along, you see, and my mother had all of those little boy dodges so pat that I had no chance in the world to spring any new ones on her.

"It's foolish, by the way, for a boy to permit himself to be born into a family in which a number of other boys have pre-

the Count has discovered a plan which works very well. He himself acts as a guide the columns of the evening paper this short As she spoke a man appeared at the announcement caught her eye: "For sale. The villa of the Count Soragna." "You wish to see some one at the villa?" he inquired, raising his hat politely. The signora smiled in quick apprecia-

tion.
"The villa itself, please," she said. "Is it not for sale?"

The man looked at her closely, scrutinizingly, until the signora felt almost abashed.
Then slowly opening the door, he said:
"Enter." at the place." "It has been for sale for five or six years

The carriage drove lumberingly up the beautiful avenue, shaded by tall I ombardy poplars, now faintly tinged with green. away," replied the signora, who was already busy finding directions as to how to en closer, the villa was even more beautiful than from a distance, and the signora drew a long breath of pleasure as she reach the Soragna villa.

"Yes, but the real point of my remark How lovely it is here!" As she stood on the threshold the stranger who had admitted her appeared again.
"If you will permit me, signora, I will serve as your guide," he said. "I am the steward."

The signora was conscious of a vague feeling of disappointment at the man's words. Surely, she thought, that air of birth and breeding belonged to some one of a higher station. He made her think of Titian's famous "Portrait of a Gentle-man," which she had long admired in the ellers at the north station at Milan was man," which Pitti Gallery.

> "The Count is absent," replied her companion, opening the door and standing aside for her to enter. As the signora went from one beautiful room to another she was more and more delighted. The combined elegance and sim-

> delighted. The combined elegance and simplicity of the whole charmed her.
>
> "The people who lived here," she thought "must be different from others. The very steward shares the olden grace of manners that is so much a part of the building."
>
> She encouraged him to talk, watching its with keep interest. him with keen interest. No one of her acquaintances could speak with more charming wit or ease, and as they paused in the rectangular library he referred

> naturally and with intimate knowledge to the books upon the shelves. The signora listened attentively. Then feeling as if she must awake somehow from the dream that seemed to hold her

she said: "I am more than satisfied with the villa. Will you please tell me what the Count's price is?"

The steward looked troubled.

"The last one who looked at it was told the price was \$500,000. But he was a common, coarse sort of man who talked about putting in a steam heating arrange ment and electric lights. The Count would not have sold the place to him under any consideration.'

consideration."

The signora looked amused.

"Your Count is a proud gentleman." she said. "Somewhat original, is he not?"

"Yes, I do not deny it," said the young man. "But people who are original are not always wrong. Born here on the estate, which the Soragnas have owned for centuries, attached to every corner and stone of the house, each room and each bit of furniture is a part of his heart."

"But, excuse me, why then——"

"I know what you would say. Why does the Count wish to sell his chateau? Because he is very poor. He has a very modest

Surely so distinguished a woman would not have remained unmarried. But he said. quietly: After a certain number of deceptions

for the visitors to the villa——"

The signora did not wait for him to answer. Turning with questioning eyes she Then you are--

"Then you are—"Then you are—"The Count Soragna, at your service."

If it was not a dream it was certainly like one. The signora, whose chief sin was not imidity, found herself for the first time in her life perhaps distinctly embarrassed. She must have shown it, for the Count bastoned to say."

"I beg your pardon, a thousand of them; but there was no other method of deter-mining the character of the aspirants to my villa. I love it so truly that I could not e it to any one who would not love it as So you committed the perfidy of spring-

ing an examination upon one unprepared?" said the signora, dryly. "And do you think you know me now?" She smiled ironically.
"Not at all," said the Count, bending gallantly to pick up a glove she had let fall."
"To know a woman is always difficult: to To know a woman is always difficult to affirm that you know her is imprudent. In my case, I merely bow in

admiration. "Bravo, Count Soragna!" and the signora held out her hand, smiling this time with the smile of a woman who has found her

master.
May I take down the sign 'For Sale'?" asked the Count as the lady made her way to the door. The signora pretended to be busy fasten-"May I take down the sign?" He re-peated the question humbly.

"What are the conditions?" but the sig-

nora did not lift her eyes from the refractory There was a moment's silence. Then the

There was a moment's silence. Then the Count said softly:
"Only one. It is that the future owner of the villa will consent to become the Countess Soragna."
Whatever the signora may have expected, she certainly was not prepared for this. Consequently, being quite unable to decide in five minutes to take both a villa and a husband, she continued to button and unbutton the glove. Just then the carriage drove heavily up to the door.
"I will come myself for the answer," cried the Count, seizing her hand.
For a moment they looked happily into

For a moment they looked happily into ach other's eyes.
"Au revoir," said the signora, gently.

In the Grasp of a Cuttle Fish.

From South Africa. Mr. H. Palmer, a diver in the employ of the Cape Town Harbor Board, was at work recently under water at the spot where the Dunvegan Castle collided with the elbow of the South Arm pier. He was engaged in attaching a chain to one of the seven ton concrete blocks dislodged by the liner. The water was clear enough for him to distinguish objects quite well, and as he was stooping over his duties a monster cuttle fish, which had been lurking in a cavity underneath the block, darted out a huge tentacle, and in an instant had pinioned his leg as in a vise.

block, darted out a huge tentacle, and in an instant had pinioned his leg as in a vise.

Another tentacle shot out, pinioning his arm. Mr. Palmer describes the horrible action of the suckers upon his hand as like a severe electric shock, coupled with the terror and nausea with which the appearance of this horrible mass of viscous gelatine filled him. However, he hastily pulled the signal cord, and the men above commenced to haul him up. Mr. Palmer was literally wreathed about with tentacles, and the exertion and terror of the incident had practically exhausted him.

Willing hands dragged him up the ladder, but even then the octupus would not release its prev. Knives and hatchets had to be brought and the strength of several men exerted to tear away the mass. Spread out on the pier the octopus measured 11½ feet from tip to tip of its tentacles. It is described as the largest that has ever been landed on the South African coast.

ON THIS BOY AND HIS PITCHER

BEWARE OF SURE THING BETS

'It's a good thing for us, I suppose, that whenever we get it all fixed up in our minds that we're too everlastingly alert and crafty to be done by anybody we usually get a fall that takes the stiffening out of us.' marked a man who spends most of his sare time just walking around and looking things over. "Up to a certain day last week, now, I had a pretty thorough undersanding with myself that there was no kind of bunco game, new or old, around New York that I'd bite on. Well, listen.

'A week ago last Tuesday, after lunch, I was standing on the northwest corner of Thirty-ninth street and Broadway kind of taking a sun bath and in no hurry to swing on board a downtown car. Two of three other men were standing near me to the control of the said.

'Our attention was attracted as we

'Our attention was attracted as we sood there by the spectacle of a boy wear-ing a scullion's cap and apron recklessly ging an empty crockery pitcher above

what internal whelps most boys are, syway,' muttered a sporty looking man sanding near me to a plain looking individual alongside him. 'Now, just look at that cub fooling with that pitcher. It's a cinch that he'll drop it and smash it to saithereens before he gets to Seventh strenge. Oh, I dunno, was the reply of the pain looking man. I guess the kid knows that he's about.

What infernal whelps most boys are,

Bet you five he drops it before he baches Seventh avenue, was the quick begonse of the man with the sporty look.

Well, I reckon I'll take that bet, an-

Well, I reckon I'll take that bet,' anwered the plain looking man, and he produced his wad.

'The sporty looking citizen peeled a V from his roll, and both the men put up beir money with a cabman. Then they took up the jog together toward Seventh awnue to keep an eye on the boy, who was still swinging the pitcher wildly.

'I held my ground and watched the proceedings. It looked to me like a pretty tood gamble for the plain looking man, still, when the boy was only about ten bet from Seventh avenue, the pitcher flew set of his hand as he was trying to describe time singularly difficult trigonometrical gure in the air with it, and was dashed to a hundred fragments against a doorsep.

'The sporty looking man and the plain.

The sporty looking man and the plain whing individual returned to the Broadway omer, and the former took the two Vs from a cabman stakeholder with a grin, saying: e cabman stakeholder with a grin, saying sure thought I was going to lose out when a kid got so near Seventh avenue with anything happening to the pitcher.'

Two days later I was standing alongde a hotel at the corner of 125th street de Eighth, avenue, in Harlem, waiting for downtown surface car, when I saw that desame kitchen apprentice clomping along be goth avenue and again wildly swingga cookery pitcher.

a crockery pitcher.
Then I cast my eyes about me, and
my only five feet to the left of me and
ming against an L stanchion was the sorty looking man who had won the bet touple of days before down on Thirty-bith street. He blinked lazily at me then he noticed that I had observed the

with the pitcher.
What infernal whelps most boys are,

next corner. "You're on,' said I, and we put up our two fives with the newsdealer on the corner.

"This,' said I to myself as I fell into step with the sporty looking man, 'is like wheedling gran'ma out of a mickel for cookies. I think I see five dollars in velvet money.

"My reflections along this pleasant line however, were interrupted. The boy was already crossing the street, still swinging the pitcher wildly and whistling merrily. He reached the other side, and went right along on his way, taking tremendous

I suppose.'

"Just about,' said I.

"'Well,' he said, good naturedly, 'I'll
bet you a V then that the boy doesn't
smash the pitcher before he reaches the

'You're on,' said I, and we put up our two

along on his way, taking tremendous chances with the pitcher and whistling with all the fervor of youth—and I had lost my five.

"How had the sporty looking man passed the signal to the kid not to drop the pitcher on that occasion? You can search me. I give it up. I didn't stop to inquire. I felt too cheap to stop for any purpose whatsoever, but swung on board the downtown surface car with a whole lot of the kinks of conceit combed out of me."

You have something on your mind, my friend.

It was the last day of March. The sig-Is this the Villa Soragna? nora, attended by her friends, was sitting 'The same," replied the driver, laconiin the cosy library. As she glanced down

She clapped her hands. "Just what I have been wanting so long." she cried. "I will go to-morrow and look

at least," observed one of her friends. must be frightfully spider-webby by this time. "A few spider webs are easily brushed

was that if no one has taken the house in that length of time it cannot be very desirable. "I refuse to allow the point. I am sure that it is only jealousy on your part beyourself," and the signora smiled tri-

umphantly.

was evidently accustomed to admiration,

a lady, tall and distinguished looking. She

The next morning, among the rare trav-

"Six months of country life, amid absolute solitude." the signora thought, as she took her seat in the train. The Villa Soragna was situated in the very midst of the Alpine foothills. There were no towns, scarcely even villages, nothing but woods and fields in the neighborhood. The signora had found her ideal

Not that the signora was an enemy of mankind. On the contrary, she loved her fellow creatures, sometimes in particular, but always in the abstract, as behooves all good Christians. But there were times when she felt an irresistible need to see

people from a distance in order to love them more. The almost empty train ran swiftly on its way, and the signora amused berself with the swift glimpses of the villas dotted here and there upon the road.

any of those," she said with a shrug of her beautiful shoulders. "If they were built by a machine they could not be more alike." When the train stopped and the signora had descended from her compartment she turned to one of the three hackmen who pressed around her and asked:

"Can you take me to the Villa Soragna?"

"I am sure that mine will not be like

"The Villa Soragna!" repeated one of the men, hesitating slightly, as if recalling something he had forgotten. "Do you not know the way?" said the signora quickly.

Yes, indeed, Excellency, it is not very

signora quickly. "Yes, indeed, Excellency, it is not very far." "Very well! Let us start," and the signora hastened to take her seat in the rough country coach awaiting her. "This is certainly the solitude for which I longed," she thought as the peasant drove slowly along the winding road. "I think I could love my fellow creatures very dearly if I was allowed to gaze at them from this remote corner of the world." At length the wagon stopped before an iron gateway which opened upon a long avenue, leading to a long stone villa, sur-

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.



Pray let me give you a little lift.

